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UNCLAS TEL AVIV 001237

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XXXX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

Mideast

Key stories in the media:

The media reported that yesterday the diplomatic-security cabinet decided to exhaust the possibility to reach a cease-fire with Hamas pursuant to Israel's terms, thus putting a major military incursion into Gaza on hold. Ha'aretz and Israel Radio reported that Amos Gilad, the head of the Defense Ministry's Diplomatic-Security Bureau, will travel to Egypt today to advance the truce.

Major media reported that yesterday PM Ehud Olmert agreed to hold primaries in Kadima, which Yediot said will take place in September. Ynet, Yediot's news web site, and other media quoted Defense Minister and Labor Party Chairman Ehud Barak as saying this morning that on July 25 his party will lead a move to dissolve the Knesset if Kadima does not choose a new leadership.

Ha'aretz cited Israel's assessment that Hizbullah may be trying to carry out a terrorist attack to "settle scores" with Israel in revenge for the death of its top executive Imad Mughniyah. Hizbullah blames Israel for Mughniyah's assassination. Ha'aretz reported that in particular, Israel fears the assassination of a senior defense official.

Ha'aretz and Yediot reported that Rabbi Avi Gisser, the rabbi of the settlement of Ofra, took the extraordinary step of allowing construction work to go on seven days a week, irrespective of the religious prohibition against labor on Shabbat. Ha'aretz reported that not all Ofra residents agree with this ruling. Earlier this month, Israeli human rights groups submitted a petition to the High Court of Justice in which they claimed that homes in Ofra are being built on private land owned by Palestinian villagers.

Israel Radio and Ynet reported that last night two settlers faked their abduction to a Palestinian village near Nablus. They were arrested.

Maariv reported that French President Nicolas Sarkozy might cancel his visit to Israel at the end of this month because of the

political situation here. Leading media reported that Olmert is looking forward to a possible meeting with Syrian President Assad in Paris at the founding session of the Mediterranean Union proposed by Sarkozy.

Over the past few days the media reported that Justice Minister Daniel Friedmann has asked the cabinet secretariat to put on the agenda of the next cabinet meeting the possible creation of a state

committee to probe the use of wiretapping in the 2006 investigation of Vice PM Haim Ramon. The media reported that yesterday police sources suggested that cabinet approval of such a committee would be a means of "terrorizing" the police.

Major media reported that opposition Knesset members accused Finance Minister Roni Bar-On of "election economics" after he announced a plan to cut some taxes while raising others at a press conference yesterday.

The Jerusalem Post quoted the Popular Resistance Committees, one of the groups responsible for the kidnapping of Gilad Shalit, as saying yesterday that Israel could "forget" about him if the IDF launched a military operation in the Gaza Strip.

Electronic media reported that IDF troops fired at Palestinians in Beit Lahiya (northern Gaza Strip), possibly killing three of them.

Ha'aretz quoted diplomats at the UN as saying that the chronic delay in appointing a new Israeli ambassador to the UN is causing scandalous damage to the Israeli mission's ability to prepare for the 63rd General Assembly meeting, where Israel is expected to face greater criticism in debates on Middle Eastern issues, particularly on relations with the Palestinians. Dan Gillerman will wrap up his tenure as ambassador to the UN next month, which lasted five and a half years, and has made it clear he will not postpone his return to Israel.

Major media reported that Ha'aretz and Israel TV journalist Daniel Ben Simon has joined the Labor Party, aspiring to become a Knesset member and create social change.

Yediot reported that a Jewish woman from Baghdad who was forced to convert to Islam 55 years ago fled Iraq through an Arab country and contacted her brother in Israel, to which she will soon immigrate.

The Jerusalem Post reported that on Sunday Nir Eliahu, a kibbutz

near Kfar Sava, accepted Amal Carmieh as a member, making her the first Arab Muslim to become a member of the Kibbutz Movement.

The Jerusalem Post reported that next week the Standards Institute of Israel will host an international conference on "Crisis Management of Water Utilities" and offer solutions for water security standards.

Mideast:

Summary:

Conservative columnist Yaakov Amidror, a retired IDF major general, wrote in the independent Israel Hayom: "The security cabinet decision [to seek a truce with Hamas] is liable to produce a situation in which Israel will be forced to pay the full price for its consent to turn Hamas into a legitimate negotiating partner while, in the end, it will also be forced to go to war."

Strategic issues researcher and former senior IDF officer Shmuel Meir wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "Israel can apparently expect to face a new situation. On one side will be the peace treaties with Syria, Lebanon and the entire Arab world, with a dramatic decrease in the incentive for war on the part of distant countries. On the other side of the scale will be Israel's policy of [nuclear] ambiguity."

Labor Party Knesset Member and former interior minister Ophir Pines-Paz wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv: "Ever since [I heard Senator Barack Obama speak at the 2004 Democratic Party convention in Boston] I have followed his career with a great deal of affection and empathy.... But one thing is certain: We need to be very cautious with Obama and examine in depth his intentions towards Israel and the Middle East."

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "Israeli negotiators must learn that it is futile to assign Western political attitudes to -- and demand democratic civility from -- our neighbors, in the hope of resolving a conflict that would never have arisen had these attitudes existed in the first place."

Block Quotes:

II. "No Illusions"

Conservative columnist Yaakov Amidror, a retired IDF major general, wrote in the independent Israel Hayom (6/12): "The security cabinet decision [to pursue a truce with Hamas] is not clear. It lacks a clear definition of the goal, and it is vague about what is worth fighting for, if need be. The security cabinet decision is liable to produce a situation in which Israel will be forced to pay the full price for its consent to turn Hamas into a legitimate negotiating partner while, in the end, it will also be forced to go to war. There are three things that ought to be clarified in order to improve the public debate on this matter: 1) If a large-scale military operation is proposed without the attendant willingness to remain in the Gaza Strip for many years to come, then Israel must not launch such an operation. Any operation that is concluded with an IDF withdrawal from the Gaza Strip after a brief presence will be catastrophic.... 2) A truce (tahdiya) will not advance the negotiations over Gilad Shalit. The only influence it might have is negative. During a truce Hamas will have no incentive to lower the price that it is demanding in exchange for Shalit. On the contrary Under the umbrella of the truce it will be easier for Hamas to negotiate since it will have no reason to fear any action against it.... and 3) Shalit's fate must not be a crucial factor when deciding whether to launch a military operation. If a large-scale operation in the Gaza Strip is justified in terms of the need to address the problem of Gaza, then the needs of the state and of thousands of citizens must take precedence over the fate of a lone soldier. After all, thousands of soldiers are going to be putting their lives on the line in the anticipated operation. Why is their blood less important than Shalit's? If Israel had decent

intelligence, it would be appropriate to endanger the lives of a few dozen soldiers in a rescue operation."

II. "On the Horns of Dilemma"

Strategic issues researcher and former senior IDF officer Shmuel Meir wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (6/12): "Israel can apparently expect to face a new situation. On one side will be the peace treaties with Syria, Lebanon and the entire Arab world, with a dramatic decrease in the incentive for war on the part of distant countries. On the other side of the scale will be Israel's policy of ambiguity. The Arab League's peace initiative likewise created a connection between the nuclear potential and peace. The doctrine of ambiguity succeeded in the peace with Egypt, but since then Egypt has raised the threshold of its demands for nuclear disarmament. The United States, which has supported Israel in international forums, was not able to remove the Egyptian position from the agenda.... Peace talks with Syria and the declaration on the part of former U.S. president Jimmy Carter about Israel's nuclear capabilities, indicate this future has already arrived. Syria, with the diplomatic backing of other countries, is likely to stick by its position and to demand nuclear symmetry: full inspection of its facilities and possibly also those of Iran, in return for full inspection on the Israeli side. A central layer in the doctrine of ambiguity -- a declarative policy of non-proliferation and inspection when comprehensive peace is attained -- will have to stand the test. Nuclear potential and peace are no longer separate worlds or worlds apart."

III. "Warily Respect Him"

Labor Party Knesset Member and former interior minister Ophir Pines-Paz wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (6/12): "Ever since [I heard Senator Barack Obama speak at the 2004 Democratic Party convention in Boston] I have followed his career with a great deal of affection and empathy.... [His AIPAC] speech troubled me not only because Obama's positions were more right wing than George Bush and even [nationalist Israeli politician] Effi Eitam, but mainly because I wondered how a leader who delivered such a pro-Israel, pro-Jewish and pro-Zionist speech had never truly taken an active role in that area -- neither in his work in Illinois nor in Washington.... What bothered me principally about Obama's speech was his over-eagerness to please his audience. As the saying in English goes, it was 'too good to be true.' And that is what it was. My concern is that a person who speaks with such alacrity when addressing the members of AIPAC on the eve of the presidential elections might speak differently at other venues. Therefore, there are two disturbing alternatives: Either Obama tells his audience everything it wants to hear, plus a bit more and, as such, could have said while addressing our adversaries what they wanted to hear. Or, once he is elected, Obama will persevere with the direction taken and will do everything, just like the incumbent American president, to appease the Israeli right wing, while imposing a moratorium on the political process and destroying any chance of making peace. I found myself worried that Obama is the kind of politician who wants to get elected at any cost -- the kind of politician who on the day after his election will use the tired old saying that 'things from here look different than they do from there.' Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe it's just over-sensitivity. Maybe we ought to enjoy and be impressed by the unconditional support he voiced for us in that speech. Maybe, but maybe not. Time will tell. But one thing is

certain: We need to be very cautious with Obama and examine in depth his intentions towards Israel and the Middle East."

IV. "Bargaining with Assad"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (6/12): "In principle, a well-negotiated agreement with Syria is in Israel's strategic interest.... The first rule of negotiation: Know your primary objective, and carry a realistic assessment of achieving it.... Israel's main goal is to weaken the alliance between Syria and Iran, and by extension improve the prospects of a strategic normalization with Damascus and the rest of the Arab world. The prospects of such a Syrian break with the Islamic Republic, never likely, were made even less so at end of last month ... when Syria and Iran signed a memorandum of understanding regarding defense issues.... This brings us to the second rule of negotiation: Be aware

of the adversaries of your adversary. Israeli officials, if they do not wish to act as pawns in Syria's bid for international respectability, ought to take stock of the reasons why even other Arab states refuse to engage with Syria.... The third rule: Know your position of relative strength. This means acknowledging that Syria, unlike Israel, is in crucial respects a failed state.... In short, the Syrian masses, now numbering almost 20 million, are no better off than before independence; they merely serve different despots. Their leaders, meanwhile, habitually deflect blame onto 'imperialism' and Israel. A final and most critical rule of negotiation: Avoid the temptation to project your values or assumptions onto the party sitting on the other side of the table. Israeli negotiators must learn that it is futile to assign Western political attitudes to -- and demand democratic civility from -- our neighbors, in the hope of resolving a conflict that would never have arisen had these attitudes existed in the first place."

JONES